

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel

Lesson 1: Hannah's Prayer and the Birth of Samuel -- 1 Samuel 1:1-2:11

Picture a kitchen at a family feast. The smell of roasted meat fills the air, children laugh under the table, and a husband moves down the line of bowls, handing out portions. Then he comes to Hannah. He gives her one portion, a worthy portion, because he loves her, and yet the food turns to ash in her mouth. Across the room sits the other wife, Peninnah, whose lap is full of children, and whose tongue is full of barbs. Year after year, the same wound is reopened in the same place. Hannah is not weeping over a small thing. She is weeping over an empty cradle and a closed womb, and over the cruelty of someone who knows exactly where to press.

We meet Hannah at the lowest point of her life, and we meet her there for a reason. The whole sweep of these two books, the rise of kings, the anointing of David, the long road to the throne where the Lord's Anointed will one day sit, all of it begins not in a palace but in the broken heart of an ordinary woman who could not have a baby. God did not start this story with the powerful. He started it with the overlooked. He started it with someone whose prayers had gone unanswered so long that her own family had given up. That is worth sitting with, because it tells you something about how God works that you will need to remember the next time your own prayers seem to vanish into the ceiling.

Watch what Hannah does with her pain. She does not bury it, and she does not numb it. She carries it straight into the house of the Lord and pours it out. Her lips move but no sound comes, so that even the priest mistakes her for a drunken woman. She is not performing. She is simply emptying herself before a God she believes is listening, and she makes a vow that costs her everything she is asking for. If God gives her a son, she will give that son back. And here is the quiet miracle of the chapter: before her circumstances change at all, her face changes. She rises, she eats, and she is "no more sad." She has handed the burden over.

By the time we reach Hannah's song in chapter two, the weeping woman has become a prophet. The mother who once could not speak now sings of a God who lifts the poor from the dust and seats them with princes, who fills the hungry and empties the full, who breaks the bows of the mighty and strengthens the feeble. And on the last note of her song she reaches past her own little family and points down the centuries to "his king" and "his anointed." Hannah did not know how far that note would travel, but we do. This is where we begin, with a God who hears the brokenhearted, who turns barrenness into blessing, and who builds His kingdom out of the prayers of people the world never notices.

Group Discussion: When Hannah brought her grief into the house of the Lord, she "poured out" her soul rather than hiding it or pretending she was fine. What keeps people today from bringing their deepest pain honestly to God, and what does Hannah's example teach us about the kind of prayer God welcomes?

Personal Reflection: Is there a long-unanswered prayer, a closed door, or an empty place in your life that you have stopped bringing to God? What would it look like this week to carry that exact burden back to Him the way Hannah did, honestly and without pretending?

Read 1 Samuel 1:1-2:11

Study Questions

1. What does this passage reveal about God's relationship to the brokenhearted and the overlooked, and how does it answer the lie that He is distant from our private pain?
2. Hannah carried her grief into the house of the Lord and poured it out before Him. Where do you tend to take your sorrow instead, and what would change if you brought it first to God?
3. Eli at first misjudged Hannah, yet she answered with humility and he then blessed her. What does this exchange teach about how God's people should treat one another, especially those who are suffering?
4. Hannah's face changed and she was "no more sad" before her circumstances changed at all. What does it look like for you to find peace by surrendering a burden to God even while the situation stays the same?
5. Hannah made a costly vow, promising to give back the very son she begged to receive. What does her vow reveal about true faith, and about the difference between using God and trusting God?

6. Hannah kept her vow and brought young Samuel to Eli, letting him go. What is God asking you to hold loosely or surrender that you would naturally want to keep tightly for yourself?
7. In her song Hannah declares that the Lord raises the poor from the dust and brings down the mighty. What does this reversal teach us about God's character and the way He runs His world?
8. Hannah's song overflows with worship after a season of weeping. How does remembering what God has done turn your prayers from mere requests into genuine praise?
9. Hannah's song ends by pointing to the Lord's "king" and "his anointed," reaching far beyond her own family. How does this passage point forward to God's larger plan that finds its fulfillment in Christ, the true Anointed One?
10. Looking back across Hannah's story, name one specific way the Lord is using this passage to form you to be more like Jesus, whether in honest prayer, costly surrender, or worship that lifts your eyes off yourself and onto God.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 34:18, the Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit; Luke 1:46–55, Mary's song echoes Hannah's praise for a God who exalts the lowly; Philippians 4:6–7, bringing every anxiety to God in prayer and receiving His peace;

Genesis 21:1–2, God remembering barren Sarah and giving the promised son; James 1:17, every good gift comes down from the Father of lights.

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